

HIV and intimate partner violence in the U. S. Implications for prevention among young females

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Background : IPV Definition

- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) occurs when a person purposely causes **or** threatens either physical or mental harm to another, and includes: physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual assault, isolation, or controlling behaviors. (National Women's Health Information Center, 2006)

Background: IPV (cont'd)

- Women < 25 y.o. experience the highest rates of IPV in U.S. (Rennison & Welchans, 2000)
 - Typically begins at age 15 (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999)
 - Approximately 20% adolescent females report physical and/or sexual IPV (Silverman et al., 2001)
 - African American females report higher rates (Howard & Wang, 2003)
- IPV is most prevalent in low resource communities (Benson & Fox, 2004)
 - Neighborhoods of poverty & households of economic distress
 - Controlling for income, accounts for racial/ethnic differences in IPV

Background : HIV

- African American adolescent females have the highest incidence of HIV and some other sexually transmitted infections (STI) compared to other ethnic groups
 - Heterosexual sex is the primary mode of transmission (CDC, 2007)
 - Condom use by a male partner is the primary mode of prevention (CDC, 2006)

Significance : IPV & HIV

- 12% of HIV infections among women were due to IPV (Sareen, Pagura, & Grant, 2009)
- IPV is associated with ↓ condom use and ↑ sexual risk for acquiring HIV (Roberts, et. al, 2005; Teitelman, et al, 2007)
- 50% of adolescent girls diagnosed with an STI/HIV report physical or sexual IPV (Decker, Silverman, & Raj, 2005)

Research Questions

- 1) How do young women describe:
Their current (and teen) partner relationship dynamics including IPV and how it influences(d) their HIV/STI risk?

- 2) What are strategies that young women use to reduce unsafe sex in healthy and unhealthy relationships?

Method

- Qualitative descriptive study
- 30 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews

- Young women who attend family planning clinics
- Ages 18-25

- Preliminary analysis of 30 interviews

Data Analysis

- Coded data using Atlas ti
- Narrative summaries
- Within case analysis - comparing their stated views with the descriptions of their actual experiences
- Cross case analysis - looking across interviews and comparing, identifying patterns & emerging themes

Preliminary Findings



Demographics

- All participants had a least 1 child
- 83% of the participants were single, never married
- Well educated group:
 - 20% some HS education
 - 60% HS diploma or GED
 - 13% college, 1-3 years
 - 7% college, 4+ years

Relationship History

- Partner Relationships
- 40% started having partner relationships \leq 13 years old
 - 83% had partner relationship by age 16
- IPV
- 57% experienced verbal abuse
 - 50% reported being threatened
 - 43% experienced physical abuse
- STIs/HIV
- 47% were treated for an STI
 - 67% had been tested for HIV

What qualities make you want to stay in a relationship?

- Trust
- Honesty
- Respect
- Communication
- Love
- Emotional support/companionship
- Sex
- Can take care of themselves
- Takes care of me/home
- Money/has nice things
- Buys me things/takes me out
- The relationship has a potential for a future
- We can have fun together
- Affection
- Happiness

Good Partner Qualities (as a teen)

- Money/has nice things
- Takes care of me/buys me things
- He is cute/attractive
- Spending time together
- Someone who is a "gangsta"
- Controlling behaviors (seen as cute)

Good Partner Qualities (Money)

- Ex. as a teen
- "A lotta times I didn't really think over it on like, the abuse. Since like, I stuck with it if the dude was doin' right for me 'cause back then I was more materialistic. **Okay, I don't care if you hit me. Just buy me this'.**" (Angela)
- Ex. now
- "That's another iffy one too. Cuz sometimes when people give you money, they want stuff in return." (Ayana)

What have you done to keep a "good" relationship?

- Cater to him/do everything he wants/make sacrifices for him
- Sex
- Show him respect
- Be faithful/monogamous
- Pay for things/pay his bills/buy him things
- Take care of him (put food on the table, wash his clothes, etc.)
- Communication
- Be myself
- Refuse sex
- Compliment him
- Give him my heart
- Listen/give advice
- Had sex to pay his rent/for money

Ex. To keep a relationship...

- "probably **turn to sex first** as a way to, you know, a way as, you know, to be in a relationship **or to try to keep a relationship**" (Tasha)
- "**I make sure I take care of him too...**I make sure that um he have food in his stomach, make sure that his clothes that need to be washed, wash his clothes for him...and you know, **normal sexual stuff you do to keep a relationship going.**" (Mariah)

Qualities that make you want to get out of a relationship...

- Violent behaviors/abuse
- Cheating/being sneaky/dishonest
- Jealousy
- Lack of trust
- Controlling behaviors
- Getting on my nerves/feeling suffocated
- Not doing anything with his life/no job/can't provide for me
- Doesn't want to do anything for me
- Not coming home/coming home late
- Gave me an STD
- No future in the relationship
- Dealing drugs
- Threatening behavior
- Lack of communication

Definitions of Violence and Abuse

- Most young women defined violence as physical acts but also said it could be verbal
- Threats were not seen as abusive by some
 - “ he just kept calling and he kept saying he was going to come to my house and he was about to come bust the windows out..I knew he was mad ‘cause you could hear it in his voice.” (Ayana)
 - “ But me personally, I never been in an abusive relationship like that. I get threats and be like, whatever.”(Ayana)

Sexual Decision Making

In your teen relationship, how did you decide to have sex?

- **Pressured by male partner**
 - Emotional, and economic pressure
 - Coercion
- It just happened
- Had a conversation/Mutual decision
- I decided

Reflecting back on sex (as a teen)

Ex. Being pressured

- “I’m lookin’ back at it and I’m like the whole time he was always **pressurin’ me to have sex** when it was like, nah, he wasn’t good for me at all. Because all that **spendin’ time** with me, **takin’ me out, teachin’ me how to drive**, all that other stuff, was just addin’ on to him like, **c’mon let’s have sex.** (Alicia)

Reasons for not using condoms

- Both tested for HIV/STIs
- Pressure
 - Anger
 - Emotional manipulation
 - Denied material things
- Coercion from male partner
- It just happened/didn't have a condom
- I didn't know better/Too young
- Unable to negotiate condom use

Reasons for not using condoms ex.

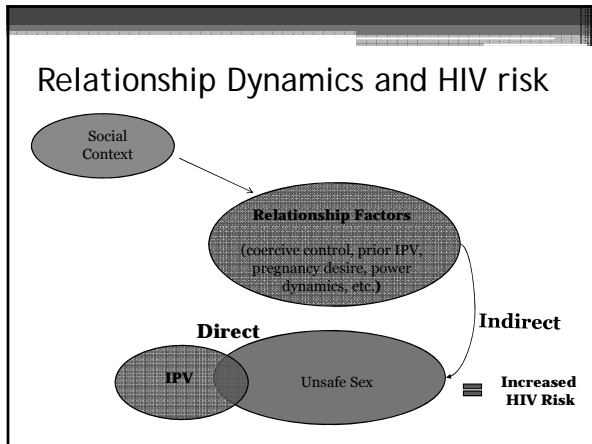
Sexual pressure/coercion

- “He don't like condoms um, he can't feel anything. And it's like it's a waste of his time. And It's like **sex**, to me, is like a **big thing** in our relationship that let me know that he was my boyfriend and **you know so by him not using protection I really knew in the back of my head like, 'oh he's all mine' cause he don't want to use no condoms.**” (Gena)

Reflecting back on condom use (as a teen)

Condom negotiation/pressure

- “I would say when I was about fifteen...I was more [easily persuaded] **...like you could probably coax me into**, into doin it, doin' somethin' more than you could now.” (Deborah)
- “but I did have unprotected sex. **I wasn't so tight about wearin' a condom as I am now**...no I wasn't as assertive and as firm with it 'cause I mean I was young” (Cynthia)



Direct ex. how relationship dynamics influence HIV risk

Forced Sex

- “Um, it was one point that we argued about sex between the both of us because I didn’t wanna have sex with him because **he was havin’ unprotected sex with other girls** or whatever. And one day I had went to the doctors and I had found out that he had **gave me a STD** so at that point, I don’t wanna talk to him or anything like that. I didn’t want him to touch me and he got mad about that and **forced me to have sex anyway** when we was there.” (Erica)

Direct ex. how relationship dynamics influence HIV risk

Condom Sabotage

- “**I always tried to use condoms...** ‘Cause the way I had got pregnant is, we had a condom but he had **poked a hole in the condom** and I didn’t know that until after we finished havin’ sex and he told me that he did it. But every time that I tried to make him use a condom, he would put it on and then end up **takin’ it off or somethin’ like that**, in the middle of us havin’ sex.” (Erica)

Indirect ex. how relationship dynamics influence HIV risk

Male Non-monogamy

- “I still **don't feel unsafe** with him, **I just don't trust him** as far as like he's, he's just a cheater” (Beverly)
- *R: Well, I **never really felt unsafe** with him except for the fact that I knew... after a while **I knew that there had to be somebody else.** (Lisa)

Indirect ex. how relationship dynamics influence HIV risk

Coercive Control

- When I live with my partner, he expects to have sex everyday without a condom”
- “ When I do not live with my partner, he does not help with childcare of our children”
- “If I refuse to have sex, my partner will say that I do not love him”
- “My partner threatens that if I were to get another boyfriend, he would hurt him” (Ayana)

Safe Sex Strategies

- HIV/STI testing
 - “We did start out usin' condoms, but we only stopped usin' them when we both when to the clinic and got checked out for everything. **If that didn't happen, then we would've never started havin' unprotected sex.**” (Denise)
- Carrying condoms
- Putting the condom
- Checking to make sure the condom is on during sex
- Try to make putting on a condom sexy
- No condom, no sex!

Implications for interventions

- Many HIV prevention programs for adolescent girls are individual-focused and promote self-efficacy
 - IPV diminishes self-efficacy and therefore could interfere with the intervention's effectiveness
- Address how IPV plays a role in increasing HIV risk
 - Partner's control over the woman's sexuality
 - Dominance in sexual decision-making
 - "Cheating" (and the woman can't say anything)
- Include discussions of sexual gender norms
 - Challenge norms that support unequal power in relationships

Implications for interventions

- Adolescent females need education on identifying abusive situations as a part of HIV prevention
- Programs also needed to promote healthy relationships
- Need interventions for **males** to address safe sex (condom use, limiting number of partners, getting tested for HIV/STIs) and preventing abuse and promoting healthy relationships.
- Also need programs that address structural issues, such as jobs, housing and social norms

Questions and Comments

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